

**Comprehensive Program Review Self-Study
M.Ed. Special Education
Columbus State University
September 2005**

Executive Summary for the M.Ed. Special Education

Major Findings of the Program's Quality and Productivity

Program Quality: Very Strong

In February 2005, a continuing approval review of the College of Education was conducted by a Board of Examiners (BOE) consisting of representatives from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC). The 2000 NCATE Standards and the Georgia 2000 Standards were used to assess the unit and its programs. The BOE judged all standards to be met for the unit and for all initial and advanced programs.

Overall, the M.Ed. Special Education programs are strong and prepare highly qualified special education teachers who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help all students learn. The Non-Traditional M.Ed. programs in Special Education have been an extremely strong part of the programs and have been helpful in increasing and maintaining enrollment. This may change with the new requirements that all students graduating from the program be "highly qualified" under the No Child Left Behind Act. This has resulted in an increase of 15 semester hours in the Non-Traditional M.Ed. program requirements so that students will graduate highly qualified in Reading Education. We are continuing to monitor this situation to see how these changes will impact admission and enrollment in the M.Ed. programs.

Program Productivity: Satisfactory

Overall enrollment in the M.Ed. Special Education programs increased by 37.4% in Fall 2002. When compared to the other M.Ed. programs housed in the Department of Teacher Education, the three special education programs combined (BD, LD, and MR) have the highest enrollment. The Special Education - Behavioral Disabilities (BD) program ranks seventh in average enrollment (16 students per year) among the ten M.Ed. programs housed in the Department of Teacher Education. Courses are offered on a one-year cycle, and enrollment in required courses is good. This helps to contribute to the cost-effectiveness of the department. The M.Ed. Special Education – Behavioral Disabilities program has a diverse group of majors (on average 75% female and 31% minority) from a wide range of age groups. Graduates of all M.Ed. Special Education programs are in high demand.

Among the M.Ed. programs in the Department of Teacher Education, the M.Ed. Special Education - Behavioral Disabilities program ranks seventh along with two other programs in number of degrees conferred annually (average of 5.75 per year). The number of special education degrees conferred by CSU is comparable to the number of special education degrees conferred by other USG state universities.

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Quality

The M.Ed. programs in Special Education are currently being revised to enable it to be in compliance with the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) mandate to be non-categorical. This means that all future graduates from the program will be licensed in Special Education – General Curriculum, rather than the current categorical certifications of mental retardation, behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities. The program for students

seeking initial certification and a graduate degree in special education through the Non-Traditional Masters Degree program has been revised so that all graduates will be considered to be “highly qualified” with a concentration in reading education.

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Productivity

The impact of these program revisions may initially lead to a decrease in program admissions and decreased graduation rates as program requirements may lead students to question the value of pursuing a degree in special education, when they will be required to obtain additional coursework in a teaching content area of 15 semester hours. Graduation rates may also be impacted as students may be required to delay their graduation until they have completed the additional coursework. However, after an initial drop-off in both admission and graduation, enrollments should return to their current levels and subsequently so should graduation rates.

Beginning in the Fall 2006 semester, the State of Georgia will no longer require students to pass the Praxis II test for teacher licensure. In place of the Praxis series the State of Georgia Assessment for Certification (GACE) which will reflect the required changes to special education teacher preparation curricula, will be required. The special education curriculum will be aligned with the content covered on the GACE.

The Special Education Program Advisory Committee (PAC) oversees the M.Ed. program in Special Education – Mental Retardation and works to improve the curriculum, courses, and resources offered to teachers. Recommendations to improve program productivity are as follows.

- Monitor recent changes in the Special Education programs to determine the impact of these changes and make appropriate adjustments.
- Advise teachers on recent changes and NCLB requirements for highly qualified status.
- Examine and refine the Graduate Recruitment and Retention Plan to determine ways to attract teachers into the special education programs.

Conclusion about the Program’s Viability at CSU

The M.Ed. Special Education program at CSU is an extremely viable one. As indicated by the evaluation of the NCATE/PSC Board of Examiners in February 2005, the quality of the program is very strong. All NCATE/PSC standards were judged to be met for all initial and advanced programs.

The viability of the program is also ensured by the collaborative relationship that exists between the College of Education and P-12 teachers. Representatives from these groups work together to make improvements to the special education programs at CSU and to impact special education in our region. The M.Ed. program in special education is a valuable resource for teachers in our region who want to grow professionally and gain expertise in the field of educating students with diverse educational needs.

Graduates of the M.Ed. Special Education program are also a valuable resource for our undergraduate program in special education. A substantial number of program graduates teach in systems served by CSU, especially Muscogee County. Our graduate programs in special education have helped to create a cadre of leaders within our Partner School Network. Graduates

often serve CSU as pre-student teaching cooperating teachers and cooperating teachers for student teaching. They are an invaluable asset in assisting with the development of our undergraduates.

The number of M.Ed. Special Education degrees conferred by CSU has increased since 2001 and is comparable to the number of degrees conferred by other USG state universities. With the critical shortage of highly-qualified special education teachers, we need to provide every possible opportunity for teachers to grow professionally and enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching students with exceptional learning needs.

Program Improvement Plan

In response to the findings of the Comprehensive Program Review, the faculty members and administrators of the M.Ed. in Special Education: Behavioral Disorders propose the strategies outlined below to improve the quality, productivity and viability of the program. These strategies will be facilitated by the Special Childhood Program Advisory Committee (PAC).

<i>Departmental Plans and Priorities</i>	<i>CPR Indicator</i>	<i>Projected Timeline</i>
1. Refine the College of Education Recruitment Plan to focus on specific methods for recruiting Special Education graduate students from diverse backgrounds	Productivity Viability	2006-2007
2. Explore various funding sources to provide scholarships for students seeking advanced degrees in Special Education	Productivity Viability	2006-Ongoing
3. Continue to make appropriate program revisions to comply with requirements implemented by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission for the development of non-categorical programs in Special Education	Quality Productivity Viability	2006-Ongoing

The Interim Dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs have reviewed the plan and will commit financial and personnel resources to accomplish priorities 1 and 3 for program improvement. Resources from external funding will be necessary to support priority 2. The Program Coordinator will communicate additional resource requests as needed to the appropriate administrator within the College of Education at Columbus State University.

Summary Recommendation and Supporting Rationale

Recommendation: *Maintain the Program at the Current Level*

The program quality is very strong. There are factors beyond our control that have an impact on the M.Ed. program. Since teachers need to be “highly qualified” in a content area subject beginning with the Fall 2006 semester, many are starting to reconsider the need for a master’s degree in special education when they can get a master’s degree in any content field and receive an increase in pay and be considered highly qualified. Some of the special education teachers in

our service region are considering the pursuit of a master's degree in an area other than special education.

As previously mentioned, CSU will continue to work to improve the current M.Ed. program in special education by responding to new initiatives (e.g., Georgia Performance Standards, No Child Left Behind Act), improving the curriculum, providing better support and resources for students, and intensifying recruitment efforts. By enhancing the quality of the program, we hope to attract more potential students.

I. Program Overview

The M.Ed. programs in Special Education prepare highly qualified special education teachers who possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to promote high levels of learning for all P-12 students. In special education content courses, special education pedagogy courses, professional courses, and field experiences, candidates have multiple opportunities to demonstrate excellence in teaching, scholarship, and professionalism. Creating opportunities for candidates to demonstrate excellence in these three areas is consistent with the College of Education (COE) Conceptual Framework and is reflected in the broad goals of the special education program. These goals are briefly summarized as:

1. knowledge of the characteristics of students with exceptional learning needs, including important definitional criteria for each area of exceptionality (scholarship);
2. competence in instructional planning, strategies, and techniques (teaching);
3. competence in classroom management (teaching);
4. knowledge and skills in the administration of assessments (teaching);
5. using research in making decisions about effective teaching (scholarship);
6. competence in communication and consultation (professionalism).

The goals of the advanced programs in Special Education reflect the belief that candidates should display *proficiency* before they enter advanced study and should develop and demonstrate *expertise* (M.Ed.) as they complete their programs. For this reason, program goals are similar for candidates in initial and advanced programs, with the difference lying in the expected level of performance.

The M.Ed. program in Special Education helps CSU to accomplish its mission of serving the educational needs of a diverse region. By preparing highly-qualified teachers in a critical needs area, the program helps to improve the quality of education and the quality of life in the institution's service area.

II. Summary Findings of the Program's Overall Quality

In February 2005, a continuing approval review of the College of Education was conducted by a Board of Examiners (BOE) consisting of representatives from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC). The 2000 NCATE Standards were used to assess the unit and its programs. The BOE judged all standards to be met for the unit and for all initial and advanced programs. Following is a summary of the findings taken from the BOE final report.

Standard 1: Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

Assessment data from Praxis I, Praxis II, GPA's, MAP evaluations, exit examinations, and national licensing exams indicate that teacher candidates know their subject matter and candidates for other school roles know their fields, both of which are aligned with professional, state, and institutional standards. MAP evaluations and the Disposition Evaluation Form give evidence that candidates and other school personnel know how to teach their subject matter and can deliver information in a clear and meaningful way so that all students learn.

Areas for Improvement: Candidates in Art Education, Biology, Chemistry, and French do not demonstrate content mastery.

Rationale: While overall more than 80 percent of the candidates in the unit have passed their respective content licensure exams, fewer than 80 percent of candidates in Art Education, Biology, Chemistry, and French passed their respective content licensure exams. Note: Chemistry and French had only one program completer each over the past three years.

Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit Evaluation

The unit maintains a comprehensive assessment system for the initial and advanced levels to ensure the systematic collection of data, providing opportunities for the unit to analyze, evaluate, and improve the quality of programs, unit operations, and candidate performance. The assessment systems reflect the conceptual framework and are aligned with INTASC and NBPTS standards as well as specialty professional associations. The unit utilizes information technologies to effectively collect and aggregate data for candidate, program, and unit improvement.

Standard 3: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice

All of the unit's programs which prepare candidates to become teachers or fill other roles as members of the education profession include field work/clinical practice as an integral part. Use of the MAP Evaluation Instrument and the Dispositions Evaluations which connects with the Conceptual Framework supports the work of the unit and provides scaffolding so that candidates acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by those who are in professional education roles. Candidates are also surrounded by experienced, caring, competent professionals representing both the University and P-12 partners. Innovations such as the use of information technology for scheduling and tracking candidate progress in a very flexible and comprehensive database, the STEADY new teacher mentoring program, and the refinement of the Partner School Network enhance to quality of the program and its graduates.

Standard 4: Diversity

The unit has clearly defined its candidate dispositions related to diversity, and these dispositions are assessed throughout required coursework in the initial and advanced programs. Three of the 32 unit faculty represent diversity. The diversity of candidates in unit programs roughly mirrors that of the university and service area as a whole. Because of the racial and ethnic diversity in the university's service area, initial and advanced candidates also work with a broadly diverse population of P-12 students.

Areas for Improvement: The college has not been successful in recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty.

Rationale: Even though efforts have been made to recruit additional minority faculty, currently there are three minority faculty in the unit. While this constitutes a slight improvement from 1998, a significant impact has not been made to ensure that candidates have the opportunity to work with diverse faculty.

Standard 5: Faculty Qualifications, Performance, and Development

Unit faculty have extensive academic backgrounds. Eighty-four percent (84%) of the full-time faculty, and seventeen percent (17%) of the part-time faculty hold terminal degrees while the remaining faculty either are working to complete doctoral studies or have master's degrees. Unit faculty are effective teachers who model best teaching practices in their areas of specialty. Most faculty have been engaged in scholarly activities and service activities to the local, state, regional, national, and international communities. All full-time tenured and non-tenured faculty are systematically and annually evaluated by their department chair, personnel committee, unit dean, and throughout the university input system. The faculty serve on committees and boards at the university and in the local community. They are also involved in local, state, and national professional associations. The unit has an expectation of professional growth/development of both full-time and part-time faculty, and faculty concur with the expectation by attending workshops and conferences, reading journals, and conducting research.

Areas for Improvement: Part-time faculty are not systematically evaluated.

Rationale: There is no systematic process for evaluating part-time faculty across the unit.

Standard 6: Unit Governance and Resources

The unit has the responsibility for authority for the delivery of the preparation of all professional educators. Systems and processes are in place to ensure that all constituencies are represented in the design, delivery and assessment of unit programs. Facilities, personnel and budget are adequate to meet the needs of candidates, faculty and programs. The unit does not require part-time faculty who teach or supervise student teachers to attend an orientation/training session on the conceptual framework or the use of the disposition or MAP rubrics.

Areas for Improvement: Not all part-time faculty are adequately trained on assessments used to evaluate candidates.

Rationale: The unit cannot ensure that part-time faculty have the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively assess candidates.

III. Summary Findings of the Program's Overall Productivity

Enrollment in the M.Ed. Special Education program increased by 37.4% in Fall 2002 and ranks first in average enrollment among the ten M.Ed. programs housed in the Department of Teacher Education. Courses are offered on a one- year cycle, and enrollment in required courses is very good. This helps to contribute to the cost-effectiveness of the department. The program has a diverse group of majors (on average 76% female and 22% minority) from a wide range of age groups. Graduates of the program are in high demand.

The number of M.Ed. Special Education degrees conferred by CSU on average is the highest in the Department of Teacher Education but has recently dropped to third over the past four years and is comparable to the number of degrees conferred by other USG state universities.

III A. Enrollment of Students in the Program

The enrollment pattern for the M.Ed. program in Special Education is shown in Table 3.1.

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Full-Time	19	20	11	16
Part-Time	28	45	43	39
<i>Total</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>55</i>

Table 3.1 Number of Total Declared Majors in M.Ed. Special Education – Fall Semester

These figures are broken down further by Specific Categorical majors in Special Education in Tables 3.2a-c.

Mental Retardation

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Full-Time	5	3	0	4
Part-Time	5	14	8	4
<i>Total</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>

Behavioral Disorders

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Full-Time	8	6	5	4
Part-Time	7	9	13	12
<i>Total</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>16</i>

Learning Disabilities

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Full-Time	6	11	6	8
Part-Time	16	22	22	23
<i>Total</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>31</i>

- The majority of students in the M.Ed. program are part-time students who teach during the day and take evening classes. Enrollment increased in Fall 2002 by 37.4%. This increase may be due to a complete redesign of the program and new course offering that were begun in 2001 and offered beginning Fall 2002.

Table 3.2 shows the total enrollment in all M.Ed. programs housed in the Department of Teacher Education at CSU. In the period 2001-2005, enrollment in the M.Ed. Special Education program has been one of the largest compared to the other education programs. While all other secondary education programs have seen a decrease in enrollment since 2004 Special Education has remained the same.

Program	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Early Childhood Education	26	25	24	22
Health & Physical Education	10	13	11	11
Middle Grades Education	29	50	53	58
Secondary English	9	24	33	27
Secondary Mathematics	12	13	21	20
Secondary Science	13	22	20	17
Secondary Social Science	7	19	22	15
Special Education – Behavioral Disorders, Learning Disabilities, Mental Retardation	47	65	54	55

Table 3.2 Number of Declared Majors in M.Ed. Programs – Fall Semester

The Special Education Program Advisory Committee (PAC) oversees the M.Ed. program in Special Education and works to improve the curriculum, courses, and resources offered to teachers. Currently, we are redesigning the entire Special Education program and we will be eliminating all programs in Mental Retardation, Learning Disabilities, and Behavioral Disorders in order to become compliant with the new Georgia Professional Standards Commission directive to eliminate categorical programs and offer only generic Special Education degree programs.

III B. Annual Degree Productivity of the Program

As indicated in Table 3.3, the number of M.Ed. degrees conferred each year in Special Education is small and has actually decreased since 2001-2002. In contrast, the number of degrees conferred in Secondary English and Secondary Science has increased.

Program	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Early Childhood Education	12	9	11	11
Health & Physical Education	1	3	6	6
Middle Grades Education	10	10	10	26
Secondary English	7	3	6	16
Secondary Mathematics	5	1	4	3
Secondary Science	1	4	6	10

Secondary Social Science	1	4	5	2
Special Education – Behavioral Disorders	7	5	8	3
Special Education – Learning Disabilities	10	8	13	7
Special Education – Mental Retardation	3	3	1	3

Table 3.3 Number of Degrees Conferred – Fiscal Year

There may be several factors contributing to the small number of degrees conferred each year.

1. Though enrollment increased significantly in 2003, some students take several years to complete the program because of teaching schedules and other obligations.
2. Some students in the M.Ed. program are working concurrently on coursework for teacher certification. They must complete their certification coursework prior to completing their M.Ed. degree.
3. Students sometimes fail to see the relevance of the required special education content courses, and for a few students this may be a deterrent to program completion.
4. Students are very confused about the No Child Left Behind Act and its requirements, and this has led to students looking towards other majors.

The “Highly Qualified” provision of the NCLB has placed an additional burden on the students in the Special Education program who are seeking initial certification and a M.Ed. degree. To be highly qualified, a special education teacher must have coursework in the content area in which he/she teaches or pass a content knowledge test in that content area for the level at which he/she teaches. In order to better prepare candidates in a content area, the number of courses required to complete the program has been increased by 15 semester hours. This addition coupled with the program redesign should help enrollment. Furthermore, changes in the undergraduate curriculum for Special Education will better prepare candidates to teach in a content area, and this will allow them to pursue studies in more specialized areas, such as Mental Retardation, at the graduate level. The Program Advisory Committee will continue to monitor this situation and make additional changes as necessary.

III C. Program Completion Efficiency & Graduation Rate

Table 3.4 shows the graduation rates for all M.Ed. programs housed in the Department of Teacher Education at CSU.

Program	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Early Childhood Education	46%	36%	46%	50%
Health & Physical Education	10%	23%	55%	55%
Middle Grades Education	34%	20%	19%	45%
Secondary English	78%	13%	18%	59%
Secondary Mathematics	42%	8%	19%	15%
Secondary Science	8%	18%	30%	59%
Secondary Social Science	14%	21%	23%	13%
Special Education – Behavioral	47%	33%	44%	19%

Disorders				
Special Education – Learning Disabilities	45%	24%	46%	23%
Special Education – Mental Retardation	30%	18%	13%	38%

Table 3.4 Graduation Rate

Graduation rates tend to fluctuate as students complete their programs of study at different rates. The graduation rates for the M.Ed. Special Education program tend to be lower than the rates for most other M.Ed. programs. This may be due in part to the following factors:

1. Some students take several years to complete the program because of teaching schedules and other obligations.
2. Some students in the M.Ed. program are working concurrently on coursework for teacher certification. They must complete their certification coursework prior to completing their M.Ed. degree.
3. Students whose bachelor’s degrees are in areas other than education, special education, or a closely related field must often take a significant number of prerequisite education courses, thus adding to the length of their program of study.

Providing a quality program in Special Education is the primary concern of special education faculty. We will continue to make every effort to provide meaningful and relevant coursework that prepares teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help all students with special education needs learn. Ongoing efforts to offer additional support and resources to teachers as they work on their M.Ed. degree should ensure that most students who enroll in the program are able to complete it.

III D. Efficiency & Clarity of the Program’s Course Requirements

The M.Ed. Program in Special Education in Learning Disabilities requires a professional core (7 credits), an information literacy and technology core (6 credits), a teaching core (20 credits) and a field-based practicum (3 credits). Course requirements are listed below.

Area A: Professional Core (7 hrs.)

- EDUF 6115 Educational Psychology: Achievement for Diverse Learners (3)
- EDUF 6116 Research Methods and Action Research (3)
- EDUF 6795 Seminar in Collaboration in School and Student Academic Improvement (1)

Area B: Information Literacy and Technology (6 hrs.)

- SPED 6785 Acquisition and Analysis of Special Education Information (3)
- SPED 6786 Special Educator as User and Disseminator of Information (3)

Area C: Teaching Field (20 hrs.)

- SPED 6187 Nature and Characteristics of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (3)
- SPED 6287 Methods & Materials for Teaching Children w/Specific Learning Disabilities (3)
- SPED 6265 Advanced Assessment of Exceptional Children/Youth (3)
- SPED 6125 Managing Students with Behavior Problems (3)

SPED 6796 Trends and Issues in Special Education (3)
EDRG 6245 Assessment and Classroom Instruction (or equivalent reading course) (3)
SPED 6269 Adaptive and Assistive Technology (2)

Area D: Practicum Courses (3 hrs.)

SPED 6417 Practicum in Learning Disabilities (3)

The M.Ed. Program in Special Education in Behavioral Disorders requires a professional core (7 credits), an information literacy and technology core (6 credits), a teaching core (20 credits) and a field-based practicum (3 credits). Course requirements are listed below.

Area A: Professional Core (7 hrs.)

EDUF 6115 Educational Psychology: Achievement for Diverse Learners (3)
EDUF 6116 Research Methods and Action Research (3)
EDUF 6795 Seminar in Collaboration in School and Student Academic Improvement (1)

Area B: Information Literacy and Technology (6 hrs.)

SPED 6785 Acquisition and Analysis of Special Education Information (3)
SPED 6786 Special Educator as User and Disseminator of Information (3)

Area C: Teaching Field (20 hrs.)

SPED 6186 Nature and Characteristics of Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (3)
SPED 6286 Methods & Materials for Teaching Children with Behavioral Disorders (3)
SPED 6265 Advanced Assessment of Exceptional Children/Youth (3)
SPED 6125 Managing Students with Behavior Problems (3)
SPED 6796 Trends and Issues in Special Education (3)
EDRG 6245 Assessment and Classroom Instruction (or equivalent reading course) (3)
SPED 6269 Adaptive and Assistive Technology (2)

Area D: Practicum Courses (3 hrs.)

SPED 6416 Practicum in Behavioral Disorders (3)

The M.Ed. Program in Special Education in Mental Retardation requires a professional core (7 credits), an information literacy and technology core (6 credits), a teaching core (20 credits) and a field-based practicum (3 credits). Course requirements are listed below.

Area A: Professional Core (7 hrs.)

EDUF 6115 Educational Psychology: Achievement for Diverse Learners (3)
EDUF 6116 Research Methods and Action Research (3)
EDUF 6795 Seminar in Collaboration in School and Student Academic Improvement (1)

Area B: Information Literacy and Technology (6 hrs.)

SPED 6785 Acquisition and Analysis of Special Education Information (3)
SPED 6786 Special Educator as User and Disseminator of Information (3)

Area C: Teaching Field (20 hrs.)

- SPED 6188 Nature and Characteristics of Students with Mental Retardation (3)
- SPED 6215 Methods & Materials for Teaching Children with Mental Retardation (3)
- SPED 6265 Advanced Assessment of Exceptional Children/Youth (3)
- SPED 6125 Managing Students with Behavior Problems (3)
- SPED 6796 Trends and Issues in Special Education (3)
- EDRG 6245 Assessment and Classroom Instruction (or equivalent reading course) (3)
- SPED 6269 Adaptive and Assistive Technology (2)

Area D: Practicum Courses (3 hrs.)

- SPED 6418 Practicum in Mental Retardation (3)

These requirements are communicated online and through the CSU Catalog. At the beginning of each semester, a Graduate Orientation is held for all new graduate students. At this orientation, program requirements are clearly communicated, and the program coordinator works with each student to develop a tentative program of study. Subsequently, the program coordinator communicates with graduate students each semester by e-mail, phone, or face-to-face meetings to update degree progress sheets and advise on course selection.

III E. Frequency and Sequencing of Course Offerings Required for Program Completion

As shown in Table 3.5, courses required in the M.Ed. Special Education program are offered on a regular basis. Students beginning their program in summer semester can complete their program of study in four semesters, if they so choose. Students are advised to take EDUF 6116 and SPED 6785 and SPED 6786 early in their program of study. Courses may be taken in any order.

Number of Sections Per Semester													
	F 01	Sp 02	Su 02	F 02	Sp 03	Su 03	F 03	Sp 04	Su 04	F 04	Sp 05	Su 05	F 05
EDUF 6115	5	1	3	3	4	2	4	3	3	2	2	2	2
EDUF 6116	1	5	5	6	4	4	4	3	3	2	3	3	2
SPED 6785			1			1			1			1	
SPED 6786			1			1			1			1	
SPED 6186	1			1			1			1			1
SPED 6187	1		1	1		1	1		1	1		1	1
SPED 6188	1			1			1			1			1
SPED 6286		1			1			1			1		
SPED 6287		1			1			1			1		
SPED 6215		1			1			1			1		
SPED 6265		1			1	1		1	1		1	1	
SPED 6269								1			1		
SPED 6125	1			1			1			1			1
SPED 6796		1			1			1			1		
EDRG 6245			1			1			1		1	1	
SPED 6416	1	1		1	1		1	1		1	1		1
SPED 6417	1	1		1	1		1	1		1	1		1
SPED 6418	1	1		1	1		1	1		1	1		1

Table 3.5 Frequency of Course Offerings

III F. Enrollment in the Program's Required Courses

Table 3.6 shows the average enrollment per section for required courses in the M.Ed. Special Education program. All M.Ed. students must take EDUF 6115, EDUF 6116, and EDUF 6795, so average enrollments in these courses are higher. Enrollments in SPED 6785, SPED 6786, SPED 6265, SPED 6796 and SPED 6125 are the best indicators of enrollment trends in the special education program. Enrollment in these courses has remained fairly consistent during the period from 2001 to 2005, with an average enrollment of 18.8.

Average Enrollment Per Section													
	F 01	Sp 02	Su 02	F 02	Sp 03	Su 03	F 03	Sp 04	Su 04	F 04	Sp 05	Su 05	F 05
EDUF 6115	12	7	11	3	10	6	9	9	7	12	5	1	12
EDUF 6116	8	6	12	3	8	9	5	9	7	5	5	5	8
EDUF 6795										1	7		7
SPED 6785						27			16			24	
SPED 6786						21			21			20	
SPED 6186				14			14			8			8
SPED 6187			1	25		7		1	8	4		7	11
SPED 6188				16			9			7			1
SPED 6286		14			10			11			9		

SPED 6287		8			19			11	1		16		
SPED 6215		2			11			8			5		
SPED 6265			29			23		10	13		3	17	
SPED 6269													
SPED 6125				29			16			20			14
SPED 6796		18			20			20		1	16	1	1
EDRG 6245			6			15			13		17	10	
SPED 6416	8	6		4	1		4	2		3			
SPED 6417	8	7		5	1		5	2		5	1		2
SPED 6418	3	3		1	1		3	1		3	3		

Table 3.6 Average Enrollment in the Program’s Required Courses

By offering the required SPED and EDRG courses on a one year cycle, enrollment is high enough that the courses do not have to be cancelled.

We have determined that enrollment has declined in the practicum courses because the majority of students in the Special Education program are seeking initial teacher licensing as well as a masters degree in special education and they are not required to complete the practicum because they complete a two semester internship in place of it.

III G. Diversity of the Program’s Majors and Graduates

Table 3.7 shows the gender and ethnic origin of students in the M.Ed. Special Education program. Overall, the student enrollment by gender has been 81% female and 19% male. These figures are comparable to the institution’s enrollment percentages by gender.

On average, 73% of the program’s majors since Fall 2001 have been white, 22% have been black, and 5% have belonged to other ethnic groups. There have been no international students in the program during this time period. The percentage of black students in the M.Ed. Special Education program is smaller than the overall percentage of black students in graduate programs at CSU. This is consistent with national figures on enrollment of minority student into graduate special education programs.

Gender	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Female	39 (83%)	56 (86%)	42 (78%)	42 (76%)
Male	8 (17%)	9 (14%)	12 (22%)	13(24%)
Ethnicity				
Asian	2 (4%)	0	0	0
Black	13 (28%)	14 (21%)	12 (22%)	10 (18%)
Hispanic	1 (2%)	2 (3%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)
Multi-Racial	1 (2%)	0	0	0
White	30 (64%)	49 (75%)	40 (74%)	43 (78%)

Table 3.7 Ethnic and gender diversity among M.Ed. Special Education majors

The gender and ethnic origin of program graduates since Fall 2001 is shown in Table 3.8. Overall, 11% of the program graduates have been male and 89% have been female. These

figures are fairly consistent with the overall enrollment percentages for the program by gender (19% male and 81% female). This is consistent with the figures reported nationwide for Special Education Graduate programs.

Though 22% of the students enrolled in the M.Ed. Special Education program have been black, the overall percentage of black students graduating from the program since Fall 2001 is only 20%. The reason for this is unknown at this time. We need to track the black students who enroll in the program to determine if they are dropping out of the program or just taking several years to complete it.

Gender	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Female	17 (85%)	15(94%)	20 (91%)	10 (83%)
Male	3 (15%)	1 (6%)	2 (9%)	2(17%)
Ethnicity				
Asian	1 (10%)	0	0	0
Black	4 (20%)	3(19%)	4(18%)	3 (25%)
Multi-Racial	0	1(6%)	0	0
Hispanic	0	0	1(5%)	0
White	14 (70%)	12 (75%)	17(77%)	9 (75%)

Table 3.8 Ethnic and gender diversity among M.Ed. Special Education graduates

Students in the M.Ed. program in Special Education are from diverse age groups. The majority of students are between 31 and 40 years of age. Table 3.1 shows the age composition of all M.Ed. students in the Special Education program since 2001.

Age	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
21-25	8	7	6	11
26-30	14	11	13	9
31-40	10	27	19	13
41-50	15	16	14	16
51-60	0	4	2	6
Over 60	0	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	47	65	54	55
<i>Average</i>	36.1	33.9	35	36

Table 3.11: Age diversity among M.Ed. Special Education students

The larger number of students in the 31-40 age range might be due to a couple of factors:

1. Students graduating from a bachelor’s program usually teach for a while before entering a graduate program.
2. For some students in the M.Ed. program, teaching is a second career choice. They may be coming from another field to obtain teacher certification along with the M.Ed.

Though the trend indicates that graduate students tend to be older, there was an increase in 2002 in the number of students in the 31-40 age range. This suggests that more students are entering the M.Ed. program from another career field.

III H. Cost-Effectiveness of Instructional Delivery in the Program's Home Department

As shown below in Tables 3.12 and 3.13, the budget for the Department of Teacher Education represented approximately 13% of the total instructional costs for Columbus State University (CSU) from 2001 to 2004. During this time period, over \$1,000,000 of the department budget came from grant funds that, for the most part, supported the work of the Centers of Excellence (see note in Table 3.12). In 2004-2005, the department budget represented 8% of the total instructional costs at CSU. Considering that, in Fall 2004, 1340 (19%) of the 7224 students enrolled at CSU were majoring in a program offered through the Department of Teacher Education, instructional delivery in the department is very cost-effective.

For the graduate programs in special education, the cost per major has decreased by approximately 64% since 2001. In 2004-2005, the cost per credit was \$206.00 compared to \$162.15 for the institution. The higher cost per credit is due to the smaller number of students enrolled in graduate courses.

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Department Budget*	\$3,116,951	\$3,176,287	\$3,143,501	\$2,032,092
Cost Per Major (M.Ed. Special Education majors) <i>(Pro-Rated Expenditures/Number of Declared Majors)</i>	\$5,732	\$3,754	\$4,578	\$2,610
Credit Hours Taught Fall and Spring (M.Ed.. Special Education majors)	1,684	1,632	1,463	1,383
Cost per Credit (M.Ed. Special Education majors)	\$296	\$253	\$344	\$206
* Note: Centers of Excellence units (ETTC, CRMC, Child Care R&R and Oxbow Meadows removed from academic departments in FY 2005).				

Table 3.12 Instructional Costs for Department of Teacher Education and Graduate Special Education Programs

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Instructional Costs	\$23,311,457.76	\$23,963,598.65	\$23,784,544.59	\$25,240,030.43
Total Credit Hours	116,543	133,777	148,797	155,654
Cost per Credit	\$200.02	\$179.13	\$159.85	\$162.15

Table 3.13 Total Instructional Costs at CSU

By offering the required special education courses in the M.Ed. Special Education program on a one- year cycle, the number of students enrolled in these courses is high enough to contribute to the cost-effectiveness of the department. In addition, the program requires some of the same courses (e.g., Educational Psychology, Action Research, Trends and Issues, Teacher Inquiry, etc.) that are required in other M.Ed. programs. These courses have higher enrollments and thus help to contribute to the cost-effectiveness of the department.

The Special Education Program Advisory Committee (PAC) oversees the M.Ed. program in Special Education and works to improve the curriculum, courses, and resources offered to teachers. Currently, we are aligning coursework with the new Georgia Professional Standards Commission mandates for Special Education – General Curriculum in an effort to help prepare “highly qualified” teachers to teach with the new standards. By responding to current initiatives and mandates, we hope to recruit more teachers into the M.Ed. program to make it more cost-effective.

III I. Program’s Responsiveness to State Needs and Employer Demand for Program Graduates

The majority of the students enrolled into the graduate Special Education program are employed by the local school districts prior to or immediately after their acceptance into the program. The local school districts have called requesting the availability of graduates from the program every semester. They are told that there are no graduates available as they are all currently employed.

It has been reported that statewide there is a critical shortage of “highly qualified” special education teachers. This has allowed the State of Georgia to make available Hope Scholarship funds for graduate programs in special education in the critical needs areas of mental retardation, behavioral disorders, learning disabilities, and interrelated special education. Currently, the majority of graduate students seeking initial teacher licensure and a graduate degree in special education are taking advantage of this funding opportunity.

The Special Education program continues to respond to the needs of the State and employers by actively recruiting additional graduate students through the efforts of the program coordinator and the faculty. These efforts have resulted in the enrollment of students into graduate programs in special education at a rate that has remained constant over the past few years.

Additional recruitment efforts have not been conducted even though the need for special education teachers has remained at a critical level due to the low number of faculty in the special education program. Until the Fall 2005 semester there were only two full-time faculty in special education to teach the courses at both a graduate and undergraduate level, this was increased by one this fall.

The program is currently undergoing a revision of program requirements to enable it to be in compliance with the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) mandate to be non-categorical. This means that all future graduates from the program will be licensed in Special Education – General Curriculum, rather than the current categorical certifications of mental retardation, behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities. The program for students seeking initial certification and a graduate degree in special education through the Accelerated Masters Degree program has been revised so that all graduate will be considered to be “highly qualified” with a concentration in reading education.

The special education program revisions are currently undergoing curriculum review and approval so that they will be available for the semester beginning Fall 2006 as required by the Georgia PSC. Three new courses and a new graduate degree checklist have passed the College

of Education curriculum committee and are being forwarded to the university curriculum committee for their review. Currently, all graduate students in the special education program are required to complete a 15 hour concentration in reading education.

The College of Education currently conducts an annual survey of all teacher education program graduates and their supervisors/employers. This surveys is to determine the overall satisfaction with the preparation provided by the teacher education programs at CSU.

III J. Position of the Program’s Annual Degree Productivity among Comparable USG Programs

Institution	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004
North Georgia College & State University	35	36	44	43
Armstrong Atlantic State University	10	12	15	24
University of West Georgia	45	38	24	23
Columbus State University	11	20	16	22
Augusta State University	16	12	13	17
Georgia Southern University	15	21	19	15
University of Georgia	14	16	18	10
Georgia Southwestern State University	17	18	16	9
Albany State University	10	6	4	4
Georgia State University	0	0	0	0

M.Ed. Special Education Degrees Conferred by Institution

The M.Ed. programs in Special Education are currently being revised to enable it to be in compliance with the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) mandate to be non-categorical. This means that all future graduates from the program will be licensed in Special Education – General Curriculum, rather than the current categorical certifications of mental retardation, behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities. The program for students seeking initial certification and a graduate degree in special education through the Accelerated Masters Degree program has been revised so that all graduate will be considered to be “highly qualified” with a concentration in reading education.

The impact of these program revisions may initially lead to a decrease in program admissions and decreased graduation rates as program requirements may lead students to question the value of pursuing a degree in special education, when they will be required to obtain additional coursework in a teaching content area of 15 semester hours. Graduation rates may also be impacted as students may be required to delay their graduation until they have completed the additional coursework. However, after an initial drop-off in both admission and graduation, enrollments should return to there current levels and subsequently so should graduation rates.

Beginning in the Fall 2005 semester, the State of Georgia will no longer require students to pass the Praxis II test for teacher licensure. In place of the Praxis series the State of Georgia

Assessment for Certification (GACE) which will reflect the required changes to special education teacher preparation curricula, will be required. This should also cause initial concern on the part of graduate students considering admission to the M.Ed. program in Special Education, thereby impacting enrollment numbers.

III K. This Program's Contribution to Achieving CSU's Mission

The M.Ed. program in Special Education helps CSU to accomplish its mission of serving the educational needs of a diverse region. By preparing certified teachers in a critical needs area, the program helps to improve the quality of education and the quality of life in the institution's service area.

The COE mission of *guiding* candidates is consistent with the philosophy of special education learning and teaching present in the current national guidelines. In harmony with these ideas, the advanced programs emphasize growth toward skillful "whole" performance rather than incremental mastery of discrete skills. The programs emphasize that candidates move through stages to become professionals who demonstrate *excellence in teaching, scholarship, and professionalism*. The program's goals reflect the belief that candidates should display *proficiency* before they enter advanced study and should develop and demonstrate *expertise* (M.Ed.) as they complete their programs. For this reason, program outcomes are similar for candidates in initial and advanced programs, with the difference lying in the expected level of performance.

The program also reflects a respect for and valuing of *individuals*; thus, special education faculty treat individual differences among candidates such as age, career experiences and aspirations, and ethnicity as a resource. New teachers and veterans work with one another throughout the program, with the perspective of each group enriching that of the other.

The graduate program in Special Education is undergoing a transformation from a categorical program to a generalist program. This transformation is a response to the mandate issued by the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission for all special education teacher education programs to become Special Education – General Curriculum programs, to allow the State to be in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act. All programs leading to categorical certification and licensure will be dropped and the new generic special education program will be initiated in the Fall 2006 semester. The revisions will hopefully be approved by the College and University Curriculum committees in a timely manner so that course preparations can begin.

The proposed revisions are also undergoing approval by the Georgia PSC prior to implementation. The revisions required the creation of three new courses in Mild and Moderate Disabilities. The course will be taught by the current special education program faculty.

IV. Conclusion about the Program's Viability at CSU

The M.Ed. Special Education program at CSU is a viable one. As indicated by the evaluation of the NCATE/PSC Board of Examiners in February 2005, the quality of the program is very

strong. All NCATE/PSC standards were judged to be met for all initial and advanced programs. In addition, program quality is enhanced by special opportunities available at CSU.

The viability of the program is also ensured by the collaborative relationship that exists between the College of Education and P-12 teachers. Representatives from these groups work together to make improvements to the special education programs at CSU and to impact special education in our region. The M.Ed. program in special education is a valuable resource for teachers in our region who want to grow professionally and gain expertise in the field of special education. Students in the M.Ed. program take what they learn and apply it in their own classrooms to help their students learn.

Graduates of the M.Ed. Special Education program are also a valuable resource for our undergraduate program in special education. A substantial number of program graduates teach in systems served by CSU, especially Muscogee County. Our graduate programs in special education have helped to create a cadre of leaders within our Partner School Network. Graduates often serve CSU as pre-student teaching cooperating teachers and cooperating teachers for student teaching. They are an invaluable asset in assisting with the development of our undergraduates.

The number of M.Ed. Special Education degrees conferred by CSU has been fairly consistent over the past four years and is comparable to the number of degrees conferred by other USG state universities. With the critical shortage of highly-qualified special education teachers, we need to provide every possible opportunity for teachers to grow professionally and enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching students with special education needs.

V. Program Improvement Plan

The Special Education Program Advisory Committee (PAC) will oversee the continuing efforts to improve the curriculum, courses, and resources offered to teachers. The graduate program in Special Education is undergoing a transformation from a categorical program to a generalist program. This transformation is a response to the mandate issued by the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission for all special education teacher education programs to become Special Education – General Curriculum programs, to allow the State to be in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act. All programs leading to categorical certification and licensure will be dropped and the new generic special education program will be initiated in the Fall 2006 semester. The revisions will hopefully be approved by the College and University Curriculum committees in a timely manner so that course preparations can begin.

The proposed revisions are also undergoing approval by the Georgia PSC prior to implementation. The revisions required the creation of three new courses in Mild and Moderate Disabilities. The course will be taught by the current special education program faculty.

VI. Summary Recommendation

Recommendation: Maintain the Program at the Current Level

The program quality is very strong. There are factors beyond our control that have an impact on the M.Ed. program. Since teachers need to be “highly qualified” in a content area subject beginning with the Fall 2006 semester many are starting to reconsider the need for a master’s degree in special education when they can get a master’s degree in any content field and receive an increase in pay and be considered highly qualified, some of the special education teachers in our service region are considering the pursuit of a master’s degree in an area other than special education.

As previously mentioned, CSU will continue to work to improve the current M.Ed. program in special education by responding to new initiatives (e.g., Georgia Performance Standards, No Child Left Behind Act), improving the curriculum, providing better support and resources for students, and intensifying recruitment efforts. By enhancing the quality of the program, we hope to attract more potential students.

